AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

Please cancel withdrawn claims 7-8 without prejudice or disclaimer.

1. (Previously presented) A method for detecting whether an image of a characteristic portion exists in an image to be processed, comprising:

sequentially cutting plural images having a predetermined size from the image to be processed;

comparing the cut images with verification data corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion; and

setting upper and lower limitations of a size range of a search window for the image of the characteristic portion with reference to the size of the image to be processed, based on information about a distance between a subject and a location of imaging the subject, obtained when the image to be processed has been photographed, thereby limiting the size of the cut images to be compared with the verification data.

2. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein said limiting said size range comprises using information about a focal length of a photographing lens in addition to the information about a distance to the subject.

3. (Previously presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the image to be processed comprises an image obtained by resizing an input image.

4. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 3, wherein the comparison is effected through use of the verification data corresponding to the image of a characteristic portion of determined size by changing a size of the resized image.

5. (Withdrawn) The method according to claim 3, wherein the comparison is effected through use of the verification data, the data being obtained by changing the size of the image of the characteristic portion while the size of the resized image is fixed.

6. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the verification data comprises template image data pertaining to the image of the characteristic portion.

7-8. (Canceled)

9. (Previously presented) A method of limiting a range in which an image is processed, comprising

providing information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted from a first image, the information being obtained by the method according to claim 1;

limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by said first image to be processed, is retrieved through use of said information.

10. (Previously presented) A computer-readable medium tangibly embodying a program of machine-readable instructions executable by a digital processing apparatus to perform a method of detecting whether an image of a characteristic portion exists in an image to be processed, the method comprising:

sequentially cutting plural images having a predetermined size from the image to be processed;

comparing the cut images with verification data pertaining to the image of the characteristic portion; and

setting upper and lower limitations of a size range of a search window for the image of the characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed based on information about a distance between a subject and a location of imaging of the subject that is obtained when the image to be processed has been photographed, to limit the size of the cut images.

11. (Original) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, the instructions further comprising limiting a range in which an image of a characteristic portion of a second image to be processed followed by a first image to be processed is retrieved, through use of information about a position of a characteristic portion extracted

from the first image.

12. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, wherein the computer readable medium having the instructions is positioned in at least one of an imaging device and an image processing device.

13. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, wherein the distance information used in said limiting said size range corresponds to distance information added to the image to be processed as tag information.

14. (Previously presented) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, further comprising determining the distance information used in said limiting said size range.

15. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 14, wherein the determining is performed by at least one of a range sensor, a unit for counting a number of motor drive pulses arising when the focus of a photographing lens is set on a subject, a unit for determining information about a focal length of a photographing lens, a unit for estimating a distance to the subject based on a photographing mode and a unit for estimating a distance to the subject based on a focal length of a photographing lens.

16. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium including the set of instructions of claim 10, further comprising subjecting the verification data to an artificial intelligence system.

17. (Withdrawn) The computer readable medium of claim 16, wherein the artificial intelligence system comprises at least one of a neural network and a genetic algorithm applied to the verification data to provide learned recognition for the image of the subject.

18-21. (Canceled)

22. (Previously presented) A method of detecting whether an image to be processed includes

an image of a characteristic portion, comprising:

imaging a subject at a location to form an image to be processed, and obtaining information about a distance between said subject and said location;

using said information to set upper and lower limitations on a size range of a search window for an image of a characteristic portion with reference to a size of the image to be processed;

cutting plural images having a predetermined size from said image to be processed, a size of said cut images being limited based on said upper and lower limitations on said size range of said search window; and

comparing the cut images with verification data corresponding to the image of the characteristic portion.

23. (Previously presented) The method of claim 22, wherein said distance between said subject and said location of said imaging said subject is determined during said imaging said subject.

24. (Previously presented) The method of claim 23, wherein said imaging said subject is performed by using an imaging device comprising a range sensor, said distance being determined based on a signal from said range sensor.

25. (New) The method according to claim 1, wherein said verification data comprises template data, and

wherein said comparing the cut images with verification data comprises computing a degree of matching between said image to be processed and said template data by determining a normalizing cross-correlation function between an image cut by said search window and said template data.

26. (New) The method according to claim 25, further comprising:

shifting said search window in a scanning direction if said degree of matching does not reach a threshold value.